LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 909
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

Amorous Tales of the Monks

From the "Gesta Romanorum"

Edited, with an Introduction, by
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INTRODUCTION

The complete title of an edition of the *Gesta Romanorum* printed in 1877 runs as follows: "Gesta Romanorum: or, Entertaining Moral Stories; invented by the monks as a fireside recreation, and commonly applied in their discourses from the pulpit: whence the most celebrated of our own poets and others, from the earliest times, have extracted their plots." The translation of the Latin title, *Deeds of the Romans*, is not by any means an accurate indication of the scope of the tales, for they cover many times and places. The rest of the long title gives a very good idea of the general nature of the stories, and their fundamental moral purpose—the morals, indeed, having very little interest today.

The origin and history of the *Gesta Romanorum* is a matter for debate; or rather, it has been decided, after valiant scholarly attempts to solve the mystery, that the collection must always remain shrouded in obscurity. There are many versions extant, but there is no original manuscript, so far as is known, in existence. Many translators have varied the text to suit their whims, and the loose structure of the collection made it very easy for many to act as collaborators, and add tales of their own choosing. The stories come down, probably, from the 13th and 14th centuries, and were originally written, as the title implies, in Latin. Some think they were written by Petrus Berchorius (Pierre Bercheure), and others that the hand of Helinandus brought them into being, but there is no substantial proof for either theory.

Probably many pens had their share in the origin of the tales.

The tales, as bald narratives, still have a great deal of sound interest. The stories of Gower, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and others, may find their origin, directly or indirectly, in many of them; and they reflect not a little the spirit and character of the times in which they first flourished. Several English translations proved popular, although the very early ones contained only forty-four stories. The complete collection, as accepted today, comprises one hundred and eighty-one chapters or tales, each with an appended moral. The moral is really an allegory, or makes the preceding tale an allegory, and it is a direct manifestation of the tendency of the centuries in which the tales were recorded. Then any story, new or old, was given its allegorical interpretation—each sect and each profession, indeed, having its own special application. In the ensuing pages the moral has been given for one story only, to show the manner and effect; after that it has been deemed undesirable to take space for what can have very little interest for present day readers.

The present text has been based upon the translation of Charles Swan, which first appeared in 1824, revised and corrected by Wynnard Hooper half a century later. It is very worthwhile to quote a paragraph or two from Swan's Introduction:

"The *Gesta Romanorum* was one of the most applauded compilations of the Middle Ages. The method of instructing by fables is a practice of remote antiquity; and has always been attended with very considerable benefit. Its great popularity encouraged the monks to adopt this medium, not only for the sake of illustrating their discourses, but of making a more durable impression upon the minds of their illiterate

auditors. An abstract argument, or logical deduction (had they been capable of supplying it), would operate but faintly upon intellects rendered even more obtuse by the rude nature of their customary occupations; while, on the other hand, an apposite story would arouse attention, and stimulate that blind and uninquiring devotion, which is so remarkably characteristic of the Middle Ages. . . .

"Much of the merit of these fables consists in the curious and interesting light which they throw upon a period necessarily involved in great obscurity. The fictions are strongly and vividly delineated; and the reader feels himself hurried back into the romantic scenes of chivalrous emprize, and busily mingling in the commotions of camp and court. The fantastic regulations of many of the tales accord with historical notices of chivalry, in which the most ridiculous commands were imposed and executed. The sports of the field, united with the pursuit of wild adventure; love, and war, and devotion; absurd penances for unimaginable crimes, and carelessness for the commission of enormous ones, form no small part of the present compilation. Every natural phenomenon is a miracle; and construed as best may serve the interests, or accord with the prejudices of the party. The first object is to espouse some ineffably fair daughter: whose affections are disposed of, not according to the common *excellent* system of policy, or power, or wealth, but by the simple and singularly efficacious method of resolving certain mysteries; in expounding riddles, or in compliance with some inexplicable vow. If this should be considered no very favorable account of what the reader may look for, it should be remembered that the tales in question are faithful representations of other days, and that the character with which the

period is impressed tolerates and justifies many absurdities. Yet are we not to suppose everything absurd which now appears so. The progress of civilization has introduced a vast number of unnecessary refinements, at which our ancestors would laugh; perhaps more boisterously, but with as much regard to *justice* as their politer descendants exhibit at the inartificial character of earlier times.

"Ignorance is always credulous; and therefore, in considering the probability or improbability of the fable, we must consider how it was calculated to impress those for whom it was invented, or to whom it was told. If the narrator suited his contrivance to the understanding, and communicated pleasure to the imagination, of *his* readers or auditors, he possessed the requisite ingenuity; and his merit was proportionably great. We ought not to make our own the standard of other's judgments; much less ought we to impose our own age and nation as the criterion of past times and foreign countries. Comparatively secluded as the monks at all times were, their views of life must necessarily have been confined also: and their simplicity would easily be duped by those who were interested in deceiving them. From the pulpit, whence it would appear that their stories were delivered, the opportunity of adding new fictions, for the purpose of illustrating new positions, would be irresistible; and here we trace the source of many of the strained allusions which so repeatedly occur. The good old custom, likewise, of enlivening a winter's evening by the relation of *fabliaux* accompanied, no doubt, by *moral and mystical applications*, gives us a delightful picture of the social intercourse and familiarity of remote times; but discovers to us another incentive to extravagant fancy and high-flown conceit. The

attention of their hearers could only be riveted by the marvelous; and that which was barely *probable*, from the constant recurrence of extravagant fiction—from the itching ears, which opened only to the wildest exaggeration, naturally became no longer acceptable, because taste was vitiated, and the imagination overwrought. All these circumstances require consideration in forming a judgment of the ensuing tales. They certainly vary in point of merit; but many of them are eminently beautiful. Some display a rich vein of pathos; and there are passages of deep poetic interest. In the description of manners, however, they are unrivaled; and my aim has been to render passages of this kind with all fidelity; while, in the diction, I have adhered as closely as possible to that simplicity of style which forms the principal charm of ancient narrative."

In explanation of the special title of this abridged collection, it may be said simply that the tales selected have been chosen largely for their amorous emphasis, which did have a large part in the yarns told by the monks of the monasteries of long ago. The crimes of love, too, especially adultery, played a large part in their narratives, probably because it played a large part in the lives of which they were the observers. In some ways it is a little too bad to sacrifice entirely the striking ingenuity of some of the moral applications of these tales, but, as has been stated, one application only is given. It should be remembered, though, that not a tale in the original is without such an application; indeed, sometimes the story itself was merely sketched, while the application was highly elaborated. Once or twice, indeed, the story was deemed familiar enough to merit only an opening sentence—immediately followed by the special moral!

AMOROUS TALES OF THE MONKS

I. A KING'S DAUGHTER, GUARDED BY FIVE SOLDIERS, ELOPES WITH A DUKE; SHE IS SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED BACK BY HER FATHER

Pompey was a wise and powerful king. He had an only daughter, remarkable for her beauty. of whom he was extremely fond. He committed her to the custody of five soldiers; and charged them, under the heaviest penalties, to preserve her from every possible injury. The soldiers were on guard night and day; and before the door of her bed-chamber they suspended a burning lamp, that the approach of an intruder might be the more easily detected. And they kept a dog, whose bark was loud and piercing, to rouse them from sleep. From all these circumstances, it would appear that every precaution had been taken: but, unhappily, the lady panted for the pleasures of the world. As she was one day looking abroad, a certain duke passed by, who regarded her with impure and improper feelings. Observing her beauty, and ascertaining that she was the reputed heir to the throne, he became enamored, and made her many promises to obtain her consent; which she, hoping much from his words, gave, and straightway slew the dog, put out the lamp, and rising by night, fled with the duke. In the morning, however, inquiries were set on foot. Now, there was at that time in the king's palace a champion of remarkable prowess, who ever

did battle for justice in that realm. When he understood the contempt which the lady had exhibited towards her parent, he armed himself, and hastened after the fugitives. A battle speedily ensued, in which the champion triumphed, and decapitated the seducer on the spot. The lady he conveyed back to the palace; but being refused admittance to the presence of her father, thenceforward she passed her time in bitterly bewailing her misdeeds. It happened that a wise person in the emperor's court heard of her repentance. On all occasions when his services were required, he had proved himself an active mediator between majesty and its offenders; and being now moved with compassion, he reconciled her to her indignant parent, and betrothed her to a powerful nobleman. After this she received many and diverse gifts from her father. In the first place he presented to her a tunic, which extended to the heel, composed of the finest and richest woof, having the following inscription: "I have forgiven thee, see that thou add not to thy offense." From the king also she received a golden coronet, bearing the legend, "Thy dignity is from me." The champion, who had conquered in her behalf, gave a ring, on which was sculptured, "I have loved thee, learn thou to love." The mediator also bestowed a ring, inscribed as follows, "What have I done? How much? Why?" Another ring was presented by the king's son; and there was engraved upon it, "Thou art noble, despise not thy nobility." Her own brother bestowed a similar gift, of which the motto ran thus: "Approach; fear not —I am thy brother." Her husband likewise added a golden signet, which confirmed his wife in the inheritance of his goods, and bore this superscription, "Now thou art espoused, sin no more."

The lady received these various presents, and kept them as long as she lived. She succeeded in regaining the favor of those whose affections her former conduct had alienated, and closed her days in peace.

APPLICATION

My beloved, the king is our heavenly Father, who hath drawn away His children from the jaws of the devil by the sufferings of His blessed Son. He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. *Deut.* xxxii: "Is He not thy Father who hath obtained thee by conquest, made, and established thee?" The only daughter is the rational soul, which is delivered to five soldiers, that is, to the five senses, to guard; being armed by virtues received in baptism. These senses are sight, hearing, etc., which have in charge to preserve it from the devil, the world, and the flesh. The burning lamp is the will, subjected in all things to the control of God, and which in good works should shine out brilliantly, dispersing the gloom of sin. The barking dog is conscience, which has to struggle against error; but, alas! the soul, desirous of gazing upon the objects of this world, looks abroad as often as it acts contrary to the divine command; and then is willingly seduced by the duke—that is, by the infernal ravisher. And thus the lamp of good works is extinguished, and the dog of conscience destroyed: and thus the soul follows the devil in the dark night of sin. These things, when our champion had heard, namely God—because "there is no other that fights for us, but only Thou, our God"—instantly He combats with that wicked misleader the devil, gains a victory, and leads the soul to the palace of the heavenly King. The wise mediator is Christ; as the apostle says, 1 *Tim.* ii: "There is one mediator between God

and man, the Man Christ Jesus." The son of the king is Christ. So the psalmist witnesses —"Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." Christ is also our brother. *Gen.* xxxvii: "He is our brother." And He is our spouse, according to that of *Hosea* ii: "I will marry thee in faithfulness." Again, "Thou shalt be the spouse of my blood." By Him, we are reconciled to our heavenly Father, and restored to peace. "For He is our peace, who hath made both one."—*Ephes.* ii. From Him we received the aforesaid gifts: first, a cloak descending to the ankle—that is, His most precious skin; with stripes, blood, bruises, and other various instances of malice. Of which texture, nothing more is meant than this—"I have forgiven thee," because I have *redeemed* thee; "see that thou add not to thy offense." "Go," said our Lord, "and sin no more." This is the vest of Joseph—the garment dyed in the blood of a goat.—*Gen.* xxxvii. That same Christ our King gave to us an all-glorious crown; that is, when He submitted to be crowned for our sakes. And of a truth, "Thy dignity is from me"—even from that crown. *John* xix: "Jesus went forth, bearing the crown of thorns." Christ is our champion, who gave us a ring—that is, the hole in His right hand; and we ourselves may perceive how faithfully it is written—"I have loved thee, learn thou to love." *Rev.* i: "Christ our mediator loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood." He gave us another ring, which is the puncture in his left hand, where we see written, "What have I done? How much? Why?"—"What have I done?" I have despoiled myself, receiving the form of a servant. "How much?" I have made God man. "Why?" To redeem the lost. Concerning these three—*Zachary* xiii: "What are the wounds in the middle of thy hands? And He

answered, saying, I am wounded by these men in their house, who loved me." Christ is our brother, and son of the eternal King. He gave us a third ring—to wit, the hole in His right foot; and what can be understood by it except, "Thou art noble, despise not thy nobility"? In like manner, Christ is our *brother-german.* And He gave us a fourth ring, the puncture in His left foot, on which is written, "Approach; fear not—I am thy brother." Christ is also our *spouse;* He gave us a signet, with which He confirmed our inheritance: that is, the wound made in His side by the spear, on account of the great love with which He loved us. And what can this signify but "Thou art now joined to me through mercy; sin no more."

Let us study, my beloved, to keep these gifts uninjured, that we may be able to exclaim, as in *St. Matthew,* "Lord, thou gavest to me five talents"; and thus, unquestionably, we shall reign in the bosom of bliss. That we may be thought worthy of the Father, Son, etc.

[The absurdity of straining everything into an allegory is very evident in this example of an application, the only one to be printed in this abridged edition. The morals are hereinafter omitted on account of the exigencies of space, as well as because they possess very little if any contemporary interest. See the Introduction.]

II. STORY OF THE QUEEN'S DAUGHTER WHO WAS NOURISHED ON POISON

[This story is founded on the twenty-eighth chapter of Aristotle's *Secretum Secretorum;* Oliver Wendell Holmes made use of the notion in his novel, *Elsie Venner.*]

Alexander was a prince of great power, and

a disciple of Aristotle, who instructed him in every branch of learning. The Queen of the North having heard of his proficiency, nourished her daughter from the cradle upon a certain kind of deadly poison; and when she grew up, she was considered so beautiful, that the sight of her alone affected many with madness. The queen sent her to Alexander to espouse. He had no sooner beheld her, than he became violently enamored, and with much eagerness desired to-possess her: but Aristotle observing his weakness, said—"Do not touch her, for if you do, you will certainly perish. She has been nurtured upon the most deleterious food, which I will prove to you immediately. Here is a malefactor, who is already condemned to death. He shall be united to her, and you will soon see the truth of what I advance." Accordingly the culprit was brought without delay to the girl; and scarcely had he touched her lips, before his whole frame was impregnated with poison, and he expired. Alexander, glad at his escape from such imminent destruction, bestowed all thanks on his instructor, and returned the girl to her mother.

III. A QUEEN COMMITS INCEST, BUT BEING PENITENT IS SAVED

A certain emperor was strongly attached to a beautiful wife. In the first year of their marriage, she was delivered of a son, upon whom she doted with extravagant fondness. When the child had completed its third year, the king died; for whose death great lamentation was made through the whole kingdom. The queen bewailed him bitterly; and, after his remains were deposited in the royal sepulcher, took up her residence in another part of the country, accompanied by her son. This child became the

object of an affection so violent, that no consideration could induce her to leave him; and they invariably occupied the same bed, even till the boy had attained his eighteenth year. Now, when the devil perceived the irregular attachment of the mother, and the filial return exhibited by the son, he insinuated black and unnatural thoughts into their minds; and from time to time repeating his detestable solicitations, finally overthrew them. The queen became pregnant; and the unhappy son, filled with the deepest horror, and writhing beneath the most intolerable agony, quitted the kingdom, and never was heard of again. In due time the queen was delivered of a lovely female, whom her eyes no sooner beheld, than—(mark, ye who dream that one dereliction from virtue may be tried with impunity—mark!) desperate at the remembrance of her fearful crime, and apprehensive of detection, she snatched up a knife that lay beside her, and plunged it into the infant's breast. Not content with this exhibition of maternal inhumanity, she cut it directly across the throat, from whence the blood rapidly gushed forth, and falling upon the palm of her left hand, distinctly impressed four circular lines, which no human power could erase. Terrified, not less at the singular consequence of her guilt than at the guilt itself, she carefully concealed this awful and mysterious evidence, and dedicated herself for life to the service of the blessed Virgin. Yet, though penitent for what she had done, and regularly every fifteenth morning duly confessed, she scrupulously avoided any disclosure relating to that horrid transaction. She distributed alms with the most unbounded liberality; and the people, experiencing her kindness and benevolence, evinced towards her the greatest respect and love.

It happened on a certain night, as her confessor knelt at his devotions, repeating five times aloud the "Ave Maria," that the blessed Virgin herself appeared to him, and said, "I am the Virgin Mary, and have an important communication to make to thee." The confessor, full of joy, answered, "Oh, dear Lady, wherein can thy servant please thee?" She replied, "The queen of this kingdom will confess herself to you; but there is one sin she has committed, which shame and horror will not permit her to disclose. On the morrow she will come to you; tell her from me, that her alms and her prayers have been accepted in the sight of my Son; I command her, therefore, to confess that crime which she secretly committed in her chamber—for, alas! she slew her daughter. I have entreated for her, and her sin is forgiven, if she will confess it. But if she yield no attention to your words, bid her lay aside the cover upon her left hand; and on he palm you will read the crime she refused to acknowledge. If she deny this also, take it off by force." When she had thus spoken, the blessed Virgin disappeared. In the morning, the queen with great humility was shrieved of all her sins—that one excepted. After she had uttered as much as she chose, the confessor said, "Madam, my dear daughter, people are very inquisitive to know for what strange reason you constantly wear that cover upon your left hand. Let me see it, I beseech you, that I may ascertain why it is concealed, and whether the concealment be pleasing to God." The queen answered, "Sir, my hand is diseased, and therefore I cannot show it." Hearing this, the confessor caught hold of her arm, and notwithstanding her resistance, drew off the cover. "Lady," said he, "fear not; the blessed Virgin Mary loves you; and it is she who hath com-

manded me to do this." When the hand was uncovered, there appeared four circles of blood. In the first circle there were four letters in the form of a C; in the second, four D's; in the third, four M's; and in the fourth, four R's. Upon the outward edge of the circles, in the manner of a seal, a blood-colored writing was distinguishable, containing the legend beneath. First, of the letter C,—which was interpreted, "*Casu cecidisti carne coecata*," [Blinded by the flesh thou hast fallen.] The letter D, "*Daemoni dedisti dona donata*," [The gifts that were bestowed on thee thou hast given to the devil.] The letter M, "*Monstrat manifeste manus maculata*," [The stain upon thy hand discovers thee.] The letter R, "*Recedet rubigo, regina rogata*," [When the queen is interrogated the red marks will vanish.] The lady beholding this, fell at the confessor's feet, and with many tears meekly related her dreadful offenses. Then being entirely and truly penitent, she was absolved; and a very few days afterwards, slept in the Lord. Her death was long lamented by the whole state.

IV. OF A QUEEN'S ILLEGITIMATE SON, WHO WAS CLOTHED IN GARMENTS HALF POOR, HALF COSTLY

There was a queen who dishonored herself with a servant, and bore him a son. This son, on arriving at years of maturity, practised every description of wickedness, and conducted himself with the greatest insolence toward the prince, his reputed father. The prince, unable to account for such perversion of mind, interrogated the mother as to the legitimacy of her child; and finding, by her reluctant confession, that he was not his son, though loath to deprive

him of the kingdom, he ordained that his dress, for the time to come, should be of a different texture and color; one side to be composed of the most ordinary materials, and the other of the most valuable: so that when he looked upon the baser portion, his pride might be abated, and the vicious propensities, in which he had indulged, relinquished; on the other hand, when he surveyed the more gorgeous part, his hopes might be raised, and his spirit animated to goodness. By this judicious device, he became remarkable for humility, and ever after abandoned his dishonest life.

V. HOW, THROUGH THE CUNNING OF AN OLD WOMAN, A YOUTH OBTAINED THE LOVE OF A NOBLE MARRIED LADY

In the kingdom of a certain empress there lived a knight, who was happily espoused to a noble, chaste, and beautiful wife. It happened that he was called upon to take a long journey, and previous to his departure he said to the lady, "I leave you no guard but your own discretion; I believe it to be wholly sufficient." He then embarked with his attendants. She meanwhile continued at her own mansion, in the daily practice of every virtue. A short period had elapsed, when the urgent entreaties of a neighbor prevailed with her to appear at a festival; where, amongst other guests, was a youth, upon whom the excellence and beauty of the lady made a deep impression. He became violently enamored of her, and despatched various emissaries to declare his passion, and win her to approve his suit. But the virtuous lady received his advances with the utmost scorn. This untoward repulse greatly disconcerted the youth, and his health daily declined.

Nevertheless he visited the lady oft, which availed him nothing; he was still despised. It chanced that on one occasion he went sorrowfully towards the church; and, upon the way, an old woman accosted him, who by pretended sanctity had long obtained an undue share of reverence and regard. She demanded the cause of the youth's apparent uneasiness. "It will nothing profit me to tell thee," said he. "But," replied the old woman, "as long as the sick man hides his malady from the physician he cannot be cured: discover the wound, and it is not impossible but a remedy may be found. With the aid of Heaven I will restore you to health." Thus urged, the youth made known to her his love for the lady. "Is that all?" said the beldam —— "return to your home; I will find a medicine that shall presently relieve you." Confiding in her assurances, he went his way and the other hers.

It seems she possessed a little dog, which she obliged to fast for two successive days; on the third, she made bread of the flour of mustard, and placed it before the pining animal. As soon as it had tasted the bread, the pungent bitterness caused the water to spring into its eyes, and the whole of that day tears flowed copiously from them. The old woman, accompanied by her dog, posted to the house of the lady whom the young man loved; and the opinion entertained of her sanctity secured her an honorable and gracious reception. As they sat together, the lady noticed the weeping dog, and was curious to ascertain the cause. The crone told her not to inquire, for that it involved a calamity too dreadful to communicate. Such a remark, naturally enough, excited still more the curiosity of the fair questioner, and she earnestly pressed her to detail the story. This was what the old hag wanted; she said, "That little dog was my daughter—too good and excellent

for this world. She was beloved by a young man, who, thrown into despair by her cruelty, perished for her love. My daughter, as a punishment for her hard-hearted conduct, was suddenly changed into the little dog respecting which you inquire." Saying those words, a few crocodile tears started into her eyes; and she continued, "Alas! how often does this mute memorial recall my lost daughter, once so beautiful and virtuous: now—oh, what is she now? degraded from the state of humanity, she exists only to pine away in wretchedness, and waste her life in tears. She can receive no comfort; and they who would administer it can but weep for her distresses, which surely are without a parallel." The lady, astonished and terrified at what she heard, secretly exclaimed—"Alas! I too am beloved; and he who loves me is in like manner at the point of death"—and then, instigated by her fears, discovered the whole circumstance to the old woman, who immediately answered, "Beautiful lady, do not disregard the anguish of this young man: look upon my unhappy daughter, and be warned in time. As she is, you may be." "Oh!" returned the credulous lady, "my good mother, counsel me; what would you have me do? Not for worlds would I become as she is." "Why, then," answered the treacherous old woman, "send directly for the youth, and give him the love he covets." The lady said, "May I entreat your holiness to fetch him: there might be some scandle circulated if another went." "My dear daughter," said she, "I suffer with you, and will presently bring him hither." She arose and returned with him; and thus the youth obtained his mistress. And so, through the old woman's means, the lady was led to adultery.

[This story occurs in nearly the same form in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the fifth day. It also occurs elsewhere, and was in a collection of

Æsop's *Fables* published in England in 1658. Stern moralists have sometimes "bettered" the story by having the husband return unexpectedly and kill his wife and her lover.]

VI. OF THE FOUR REPUTED SONS OF A DECEASED KING, AND HOW IT WAS DECIDED WHICH OF THEM WAS REALLY HIS

There was a wise and rich king who possessed a beloved, but not a loving wife. She had had three illegitimate sons, who proved ungrateful and rebellious to their reputed parent. In due time she brought forth another son, whose legitimacy was undisputed; and after arriving at a good old age, the king died, and was buried in the royal sepulcher of his fathers. But the death of the old king caused great strife amongst his surviving sons, about the right of succession. All of them advanced a claim, and none would relinquish it to the other; the three first presuming upon their priority in birth, and the last upon his legitimacy. In this strait, they agreed to refer the absolute decision of their cause to a certain honorable knight of the late king. When this person, therefore, heard their difference, he said, "Follow my advice, and it will greatly benefit you. Draw from its sepulcher the body of the deceased monarch; prepare, each of you, a bow and single shaft, and whosoever transfixes the heart of his father shall obtain the kingdom." The counsel was approved, the body was taken from its repository and bound to a tree. The arrow of the first son wounded the king's right hand—on which, as if the contest were determined, they proclaimed him heir to the throne. But the second arrow went nearer, and entered the mouth; so that he, too, considered himself the

undoubted lord of the kingdom. However, the third perforated the heart itself, and consequently imagined that his claim was fully decided, and his succession sure. It now came to the turn of the fourth and last son to shoot, but he broke forth into a lamentable cry, and with eyes swimming in tears, said, "Oh! my poor father; have I then lived to see you the victim of an impious contest—thine own offspring lacerate thy unconscious clay?—Far, oh! far be it from me to strike thy venerated form, whether living or dead." No sooner had he uttered these words, than the nobles of the realm, together with the whole people, unanimously elected him to the throne; and depriving the three barbarous wretches of their rank and wealth, expelled them forever from the kingdom.

[In Persian tradition it was held that illegitimate sons were undoubtedly rebellious to their reputed father; intractability was a recognized proof of illegitimacy. The whole story bears a close analogy to the famous judgment of Solomon. In any case, the tale has a distinct Eastern origin.]

VII. OF THE TREACHERY OF THE DUCHESS ROSIMILA AND ITS REWARD

Conan, king of the Hungarians, was besieging a castle in the town of Julius, called Sondat. Rosimila, the duchess of that place, had four sons and two daughters. When she perceived that Conan was a wonderfully handsome man, she sent him a secret message, saying, "If you will take me to wife I will surrender the castle to you." The king acquiesced and the castle was given up; but the sons, indignant at the treacherous conduct of their mother, fled together. Conan, however, adhering to his prom-

ise, married the duchess on the following day. But the next morning after the nuptials, he delivered her to twelve Hungarian soldiers, to be publicly abused and mocked; and on the third day, he commanded her to be stabbed, and transfixed from the throat downward, observing, "A wife who betrayed her country to gratify her evil passions, ought to possess such a husband."

VIII. HOW A CERTAIN VALIANT KNIGHT WON THE DAUGHTER OF AN EMPEROR

The Emperor Vespasian had a daughter called Aglaes, whose loveliness was greater than that of all other women. It happened that as she stood opposite him on a certain occasion, he considered her very attentively, and then adderssed her as follows: "My beloved daughter, thy beauty merits a loftier title than thou hast yet received. I will change thy name; henceforward, be thou called the LADY OF COMFORT, in sign that whosoever looks upon thee in sorrow may depart in joy."

Now the emperor possessed, near his palace, a delicious garden, in which he frquently walked. Proclamation was made that whosoever wished to marry his daughter should come to the palace, and remain in this garden the space of three of four days; when they quitted it, the ceremony should take place. Immense crowds were allured by the apparently easy terms of the notice; they entered the garden, but were never again seen. Not one of them returned. But a certain knight, who dwelt in some remote country, hearing of the conditions by which the daughter of a great king might be espoused, came to the gate of the palace and demanded entrance. On being introduced to the emperor, he spoke thus: "I hear it

commonly reported, my lord, that whoever enters your garden shall espouse your daughter. For this purpose I come." "Enter, then," said the emperor; "on thy return thou shalt marry her." "But," added the knight, "I solicit one boon of your majesty. Before I enter the garden, I would entreat an opportunity of conversing a short time with the lady." "I have no objection to that," said the emperor. She was called, and the knight accosted her in these words: "Fair damsel,thou hast been called the *Lady of Comfort*, because everyone who enters thy presence sorrowful returns contented and happy. I, therefore, approach thee sad and desolate—give me the means to leave thee in happiness; many have entered the garden, but never any reappeared. If the same chance happen to me—alas! that I should have sought thee in marriage." "I will tell thee the truth," said the lady, "and convert thy happiness into pleasure. In that garden there is an enormous lion, which devours everyone who enters with the hope of marrying me. Arm thyself, therefore, cap-a-pie [head to foot], and smear your armor with gum. As soon as you have entered the garden the lion will rush toward you; attack him manfully, and when you are weary, leave him. Then he will instantly seize you by the arm or leg; but in so doing, the gum will adhere to his teeth, and he will be unable to hurt you. As soon as you perceive this, unsheath your sword and separate his head from his body. Besides the ferocious animal I have described, there is another danger to be overcome. There is but one entrance, so intricate are the labyrinths, that egress is nearly impossible without assistance. But here also I will befriend you. Take this ball of thread, and attach one of the ends to the gate as you enter,

and retaining the line, pass into the garden. But, as you love your life, beware that you lose not the thread."

The knight exactly observed all these instructions. Having armed himself, he entered the garden; and the lion, with open mouth, rushed forward to devour him. He defended himself resolutely; and when his strength failed, he leapt a few paces back. Then, as the lady had said, the lion seized upon the knight's arm; but, since his teeth were clogged with gum, he did no injury, and the sword presently put an end to the combat. Unhappily, however while exulting over his victory, he let go the thread, and in great tribulation wandered about the garden for three days, diligently searching the lost clue. Towards night he discovered it, and with no small joy hastened back to the gate. Then, loosening the thread, he bent his way to the presence of the emperor; and in due time the Lady of Comfort became his wife.

[The striking resemblance to the story of Theseus and the Minotaur, in the Cretan labyrinth, where Ariadne provided a similar thread, cannot be missed.]

IX. HOW A KNIGHT RECOVERED HER DOMINIONS FOR A CERTAIN LADY AND WAS SLAIN BEFORE HE COULD BE MARRIED TO HER

There once lived a king who had a beautiful and beloved daughter. After his death she succeeded to the throne, but, being young and unprotected, a certain tyrannical duke came to her and, by means of large promises. won her to dishonor. When his iniquitous purpose was accomplished, the girl wept bitterly; and soon

after the tyrant expelled her from the inheritance. Thus reduced from the splendors of royalty to the lowest state of wretchedness, she solicited alms of the passengers. It happened that as she sat weeping by the wayside, a certain knight passed by, and observing her great beauty, became enamored of her. "Fair lady," said he, "what are you?" "I am," replied the weeping girl, "the only daughter of a king; after whose death a tyrant seduced and abused me, and then deprived me of my inheritance." "Well," returned the knight, "are you willing to marry me?" "Oh, my lord!" exclaimed she, "I desire it beyond anything that could happen." "Then plight me your faith," said the knight; "promise to receive no one for your husband but me, and I will make war upon the tyrant, and reinstate you in your possessions. But if I fall in the conflict, I entreat you to retain my bloody arms under your care, in testimony of affection; that in case anyone hereafter shall desire your love, you may enter the chamber in which the arms hang, and may thus be reminded of the proof I have given of my attachment and devotion to your service." "I promise faithfully," returned she, "to comply with your wishes: but, oh! may your life be safe!" The knight therefore armed himself, and proceeded to engage the tyrant, who had heard of his intention, and prepared for the attack. The knight, however, overcame him, and cut off his head: but, receiving a mortal wound, he died on the third day. The lady bewailed his death, and hung up his bloody armor in her chamber. She visited it frequently, and washed it with bitter tears. Many noblemen sought to espouse her, and made magnificent promises; but invariably before returning an answer she entered the chamber, and, surveying the bloody armor steadfastly, exclaimed, amid abundance

of tears, "Oh, thou, who devotedst thyself to death for one so unworthy and restoredst me my kingdom!—far be it from me to adjure my plighted faith." Then returning to those who sought her love, she declared her resolution never to unite herself with another. When they heard this they departed; and thus she remained single to the end of her life.

[This, the 66th tale of the *Gesta*, is very similar to the 25th, which related of a pilgrim who also rescued a lady, under similar terms, making her preserve his staff and scrip. But this other lady was unfaithful, and, when wooed by an acceptable suitor, removed the mementos of her benefactor. Dante Gabriel Rossetti has used this story as the basis of his poem, *The Staff and Scrip*.]

X. HOW THE WIFE OF A KNIGHT WAS REBUKED BY THE CROWING OF TWO COCKS, BUT NOT OF THE THIRD

In the reign of Gordian, there was a certain noble soldier who had a fair but vicious wife. It happened that her husband having occasion to travel, the lady sent for her gallant. Now, one of her handmaids, it seems, was skilful in interpreting the song of birds; and in the court of the castle there were three cocks. During the night, while the gallant was with his mistress, the first cock began to crow. The lady heard it, and said to her servant, "Dear friend, what says yonder cock?" She replied, "That you are grossly injuring your husband." "Then," said the lady, "kill that cock without delay." They did so; but soon after the second cock crew, and the lady repeated her question. "Madam," said the handmaid, "he says, 'My companion died for revealing the truth, and for

the same cause,' I am prepared to die.'" "Kill him," cried the lady,—which they did. After this, the third cock crew. "What says he?" asked she again. "Hear, see, and say nothing, if you would live in peace." "Oh, oh!" said the lady, "*don't* kill him." And her orders were obeyed.

[The interpretation of the language of birds is distinctly an oriental device, made the basis of many tales, including some of those in the *Arabian Nights.*]

XI. OF THE THREE DAUGHTERS OF A KING, WHO, BEING WIDOWS, WOULD NOT MARRY AGAIN

There formerly lived a king who had three fair daughters. He married them to three dukes; but, unhappily, all their husbands died in the space of one year. The king, being made acquainted with this circumstance, would have had his daughters married again, and calling the first into his presence, he said: "My dear daughter, your husband is dead; I will therefore unite you to another." But she would by no means consent, and assigned for it this reason: "If I marry again, I should love my second husband equally with the first; perhaps more, or it might be less. This ought not to be; for my first husband possessed my earliest affection—my virgin troth. Therefore the second ought not to be loved so well. But I might love him more, and this would increase the evil: on the other hand, if I loved him less, there would exist only contention between us. So that I resolve never to be espoused again." The king, satisfied with what he heard, called another of his daughters, and proposed the same thing to her as to her eldest sister. She re-

plied, "My lord, I also decline this matter. For should I comply, it must be either for riches, or power, or beauty. Now, of riches I have quite enough; my friends are sufficiently numerous to defend me; and as for beauty, I do not believe there was so beautiful a person in the world as my late husband. Therefore, I too resolve upon a single state." The king then applied to the third daughter, and she gave the following reasons for refusing his request: "If," said she, "I marry, my husband must desire me either for my beauty or my wealth. Now, it cannot be for the former, because I am not beautiful; then, it must be for the latter, and true love never existed which was founded upon mercenary feelings. When wealth flies, love flies with it. Therefore, I would on no account marry again. Moreover, the Sacred Writings say that a husband and wife are one body but two souls; therefore, the body of my husband is my body, and the converse. Every day I visit the sepulcher of my deceased lord, and he is ever present to my mind. For all these causes, I determine to remain as I am." The king, pleased with the virtuous resolutions of his daughters, solicited them no more.

[Anent the last, there is an English proverb: "When Poverty comes in at the door, Love flies out at the window."]

XII. HOW A KNIGHT RESCUED A YOUNG GIRL FROM A CERTAIN FELLOW, AND OF HER SUBSEQUENT INGRATITUDE TO HER PRESERVER

The Emperor Frederic decreed that, if any female were violated, whosoever freed her from the hand of the oppressor should have her for his wife if he wished. Now, it happened that a certain vile wretch caught up a young girl,

and dragging her into a forest, there abused her. She shrieked violently; and a noble knight, riding by some chance in the same forest, heard her exclamations, and spurred on his horse to her assistance. He inquired the occasion of the clamor. "Oh, my lord," said the damsel, "for the love of God, succor me. This villain has abused me, and threatened me with destruction." "My lord," answered the fellow, "she is my wife, whom I have taken in adultery, and I therefore menaced her with death." "Do not believe it, my lord," said the girl. "I never was his wife, nor have I been other than a maid, until treacherously maltreated by this ruffian. Help me, then, I implore you." "I perceive plainly," said the knight, "that this wretch has oppressed you, and I will therefore free you from his hands." "You will do this at your peril," answered the other; "I will defend my right to the last." Saying which, he prepared himself for a contest. After a desperate struggle, the knight obtained the victory, but was dangerously wounded. He then said to the lady, "Are you pleased to espouse me?" "Willingly," returned she; "I wish it from my heart, and here pledge my faith." This done, the knight said, "You shall reside in my castle for a few days; and in the meantime I will go to my parents, and provide everything requisite for our union. After that, I will return and espouse you in great splendor." "I am ready to obey you in all things," answered the lady; and the knight, having placed her as he had said, bade her farewell. But while he was absent, an oppressive lord of that country went to the castle, where the girl was placed, and knocked at the gate. She denied him admission; and he had then recourse to magnificent promises. He declared himself ready to espouse her honorably; and she, lending too credulous

an ear to what was said, at last opened the gate. He went in, and remained with her during the night. In about a month's space, the knight returned to his castle. He knocked, but no one replied to him. Filled with the greatest bitterness of heart, he said, "Oh, dear girl, recall how I saved thy life, and the faith which thou solemnly pledged me. Speak, dear girl, and let me behold thy face." The lady, hearing this, opened the window, and said, "Look, you ass! what does it please ye to want?" "I marvel," replied he, "at thy ingratitude. I received several dangerous wounds in defending thee; and if thou art incredulous, I will show them." Saying this, he loosed his robe, and discovered the scars. "Do not," added he, "be ungrateful; open the gate, that I may receive you as my beloved wife." But she made no answer, and turned away. The knight complained to the judge, and alleged the services he had rendered her. He displayed the wounds taken in her behalf, and claimed her in recompense as his wife. The judge, therefore, sent for the seducer, and said, "Hast thou withheld the woman whom the knight's bravery freed from uncourteous usage?"

"I have, my lord."

"And, according to law, she voluntarily became his wife? How, then, darest thou affect the wife of another? First, you entered his castle during his absence; next, you violated his bed; lastly, for a long time you have kept his wife from him: what have you to answer?"

He was silent; and the judge, turning to the woman, said, "Girl! by the law of the land, you are doubly the wife of this knight. First, because he freed you from a violator; and secondly, because you contracted yourself to him. Why hast thou opened the gate of thy husband's castle to another than he?" She, also, was un-

able to answer; and the judge condemned both to be crucified. This was done accordingly, and much praise was given to the judge for the sentence he had pronounced.

XIII. HOW A YOUTH HAD THREE VALUABLE TALISMANS, AND HAVING LOST THEM ALL THROUGH THE WILES OF A WOMAN, AT LENGTH RECOVERED THEM

King Darius was a circumspect prince, and had three sons, whom he much loved. On his deathbed he bequeathed the kingdom to his first-born; to the second, all his own personal acquisitions; and to the third a golden ring, a necklace, and a piece of valuable cloth. The ring had the power to render anyone who bore it on his finger beloved; and, moreover, obtained for him whatsoever he sought. The necklace enabled the person who wore it upon his breast to accomplish his heart's desire; and the cloth had such virtue, that whosoever sat upon it and thought where he would be carried, there he instantly found himself. These three gifts the king conferred upon the younger son, for the purpose of aiding his studies; but the mother retained them until he was of a proper age. Soon after the bequests, the old monarch gave up the ghost, and was magnificently buried. The two elder sons then took possession of their legacies, and the mother of the younger delivered to him the ring, with the caution that he should beware of the artifices of women, or he would otherwise lose the ring. Jonathan (for that was his name) took the ring, and went zealously to his studies, in which he made himself a proficient. But walking on a certain day through the street, he observed a very beautiful woman, with whom he was so

much struck, that he took her to him. He continued, however, to use the ring, and found favor with everyone, insomuch that whatever he desired he had.

Now, the lady was greatly surprised that he lived so splendidly, having no possessions; and once, when he was particularly exhilarated, tenderly embraced him, and protested that there was not a creature under the sun whom she loved so much as she did him. He ought therefore, she thought, to tell her by what means he supported his magnificence. He, suspecting nothing, explained the virtues of the ring; and she begged that he would be careful of so invaluable a treasure. "But," added she, "in your daily intercourse with men, you may lose it; place it in my custody, I beseech you." Overcome by her entreaties, he gave up the ring; and when his necessities came upon him, she asserted loudly that thieves had carried it off. He lamented bitterly that now he had not any means of subsistence; and, hastening to his mother, stated how he had lost his ring. "My son," said she, "I forewarned you of what would happen, but you have paid no attention to my advice. Here is the necklace; preserve it more carefully. If it be lost, you will forever want a thing of the greatest honor and profit." Jonathan took the necklace, and returned to his studies. At the gate of the city his mistress met him, and received him with the appearance of great joy. He remained with her, wearing the necklace upon his breast; and whatever he thought, he possessed. As before, he lived so gloriously that the lady wondered, well knowing that he had neither gold nor silver. She guessed, therefore, that he carried another talisman; and cunningly drew from him the history of the wonder-working necklace. "Why," said the lady, "do you always take it with you?

You may think in one moment more than can be made use of in a year. Let me keep it." "No," replied he, "you will lose the necklace, as you lost the ring; and thus I shall receive the greatest possible injury." "O my lord," replied she, "I have learnt, by having had the custody of the ring, how to secure the necklace; and I assure you no one can possibly get it from me." The silly youth confided in her words, and delivered the necklace.

Now, when all he possessed was expended, he sought his talisman; and she, as before, solemnly protested that it had been stolen. This threw Jonathan into the greatest distress. "Am I mad," cried he, "that after the loss of my ring I should give up the necklace?" Immediately hastening to his mother, he related to her the whole circumstance. Not a little afflicted, she said, "Oh, my dear child, why didst thou place confidence in the woman? People will believe thee a fool; but be wise, for I have nothing more for you than the valuable cloth which your father left: and if you lose that, it will be quite useless returning to me." Jonathan received the cloth, and again went to his studies. The harlot seemed very joyful; and he, spreading out the cloth, said, "My dear girl, my father bequeathed me this beautiful cloth; sit down upon it by my side." She complied, and Jonathan secretly wished that they were in a desert place, out of reach of man. The talisman took effect; they were carried into a forest on the utmost boundary of the world, where there was not a trace of humanity. The lady wept bitterly, but Jonathan paid no regard to her tears. He solemnly vowed to Heaven that he would leave her a prey to the wild beasts, unless she restored his ring and necklace; and this she promised to do. Presently, yielding to her request, the foolish Jonathan

discovered the power of the cloth; and, in a little time being weary, placed his head in her lap and slept. In the interim, she contrived to draw away that part of the cloth upon which he reposed, and sitting upon it alone, wished herself where she had been in the morning. The cloth immediately executed her wishes, and left Jonathan slumbering in the forest. When he awoke, and found his cloth and his mistress departed, he burst into an agony of tears. Where to bend his steps he knew not; but arising, and fortifying himself with the sign of the cross, he walked along a certain path, until he reached a deep river, over which he must pass. But he found it so bitter and hot, that it even separated the flesh from the bones. Full of grief, he conveyed away a small quantity of that water, and when he had proceeded a little further, felt hungry. A tree upon which hung the most tempting fruit invited him to partake; he did so, and immediately became a leper. He gathered also a little of the fruit, and conveyed it with him. After traveling for some time, he arrived at another stream, of which the virtue was such, that it restored the flesh to his feet; and eating of a second tree, he was cleansed from his leprosy. Some of that fruit he likewise took along with him.

Walking in this manner day after day, he came at length to a castle, where he was met by two men, who inquired what he was. "I am a physician," answered he. "This is lucky," said the other; "the king of this country is a leper, and if you are able to cure him of his leprosy, vast rewards will be assigned you." He promised to try his skill; and they led him forward to the king. The result was fortunate; he supplied him with the fruit of the second tree, and the leprosy left him; and washing the flesh with the water, it was completely

restored. Being rewarded most bountifully, he embarked on board a vessel for his native city. There he circulated a report that a great physician was arrived; and the lady who had cheated him of the talismans, being sick unto death, immediately sent for him. Jonathan was so much disguised that she retained no recollection of him, but he very well remembered her. As soon as he arrived, he declared that medicine would avail nothing, unless she first confessed her sins; and if she had defrauded anyone, it must be restored. The lady, reduced to the very verge of the grave, in a low voice acknowledged that she had cheated Jonathan of the ring, the necklace, and cloth; and had left him in a desert place to be devoured by wild beasts. "Tell me, lady, where these talismans are?" "In that chest," answered she; and delivered up the keys, by which he obtained possession of his treasures. Jonathan then gave her of the fruit which produced leprosy; and, after she had eaten, of the water which separated the flesh from the bones. The consequence was that she was excruciated with agony, and shortly died. Jonathan hastened to his mother, and the whole kingdom rejoiced at his return. He told by what means God had freed him from such various dangers; and, having lived many years, ended his days in peace.

XIV. HOW A CERTAIN LADY ENABLED HER LOVER TO ESCAPE BEFORE HER HUSBAND'S FACE

A certain knight went to gather grapes in his vineyard. His wife, imagining that he would be absent for a longer time than he actually was, sent hastily for her gallant. While they were together the knight returned: for it seems,

while plucking down a bunch of grapes, he had struck out an eye, and came home in great agony. The lady, hearing his knock at the gate, was much perturbed, and immediately concealed her lover. The knight entering, complained of his wounded eye, and directed a bed to be prepared, that he might lie down. But the wife, fearing lest the gallant, who was hidden in the chamber, should be detected, said, "Why would you go to bed? tell me what has happened." He told her. "My dear lord," cried she, "permit me to strengthen the uninjured eye by medicinal applications, or the diseased part may communicate with the sound, and thereby both be irremediably injured." The knight made no objection, and his wife spreading a large plaster so as completely to obstruct his sight, beckoned to her gallant, who escaped. Satisfied with her successful stratagem, the lady observed to the husband, "There, dear, now I feel satisfied that your sound eye will take no injury. Go into your bed and sleep."

[The fine irony of some of these tales causes one to wonder whether it was always consciously so meant. It might be explained, here, that in former days women were fairly apt surgeons. Compare XX.]

XV. STORY OF LUCRETIA

Lucretia, a noble Roman lady, was the wife of Calatinus. The latter invited to his castle Sextus, the son of the Emperor Tarquinius, who became violently enamored of his beautiful wife. Selecting a seasonable opportunity, when both Calatinus and the emperor had departed from Rome, he returned to the above-mentioned castle, and slept there. During the night, not as a friend but foe, he secretly entered the bed-

chamber of Lucretia, and putting one hand upon her breast, while he held a drawn sword in the other, said, "Comply with my wishes, or I will kill you." But she resolutely repelled him; and Sextus, enraged, assured her that he would stab a slave and place him in her bed, so that the world would believe her guilty of the most low-lived and flagrant wickedness. At last Sextus, accomplishing his villainy, went away; and the lady, full of the deepest grief, despatched letters to her father and husband, to her brothers, to the emperor, together with the proconsuls; and when they were all present she spoke thus: "Not as a friend, but as a foe, Sextus entered my house. Calatinus, your bed has known the garments of a stranger; but though my body is violated, my mind is innocent. Acquit me of crime, and I will provide my own punishment." At these words, snatching a sword which she had hidden beneath her robe, she plunged it into her breast. The assembled friends, taking up the weapon, swore by the blood of the injured Lucretia to drive the family of the Tarquins from Rome. And they did so. As for Sextus, the author of this tragedy, he was miserably slaughtered not long after.

[*Calatinus* refers, of course, to *Collatinus*. This tale is familiar for many reasons; perhaps its most famous celebration is in Shakespeare's poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*.]

XVI. STORY OF THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE KNIGHT OF EGYPT AND THE KNIGHT OF BALDAC

There were two knights, of whom one dwelt in Egypt and the other in Baldac [Bagdad]. Messengers often passed between them; and whatever there was curious in the land of Egypt, the knight of that country sent to his

friend, and he, in like manner, sent back an equivalent. Thus much kindness was manifested on both sides. But neither had ever seen the other.

As the knight of Baldic once lay upon his bed, he held the following soliloquy: "My correspondent in Egypt has discovered much friendship for me; but I have never yet seen him: I will go and pay him a visit." Accordingly, he hired a ship and went into Egypt; and his friend, hearing of his arrival, met him by the way, and received him with much pleasure. Now, the knight had a very beautiful girl in his house, with whom the knight of Baldac was so smitten, that he fell sick and pined away. "My friend," said the other, "what is the matter with you?" "My heart," returned his comrade, "has fixed itself upon one of the women of your household, and unless I may espouse her I shall die." Upon this, all the household, save the individual in question, were summoned before him; and having surveyed them, he exclaimed, "I care little or nothing for these. But there is one other whom I have not seen; and her my soul loveth." At last this girl was shown to him. He protested that it was to her alone that he must owe his life. "Sir," said his friend, "I brought this girl up with the intention of making her my wife; and I shall obtain much wealth with her. Nevertheless, so strong is my affection for you, that I give her to you with all the riches which should have fallen to my share." The sick knight, overjoyed at his good fortune, received the lady and the money, and returned with her to Baldac.

After a while the knight of Egypt became so extremely indigent that he possessed no habitation. "I had better," thought he, "go to my friend of Baldac, to him whom I enriched, and inform him of my wants." He did so; and

reached Baldac a while after sunset. "It is night," said he to himself; "if I go now to my friend's house, he will not know me, for I am so poorly dressed. I, who once used to have a large household about me, am now desolate and destitute. Tonight, therefore, I will rest, and on the morrow will go to his mansion." Happening to look toward a burial-ground, he observed the gates of a church thrown open, and there he determined to remain for the night. But while he was endeavoring to compose himself to sleep in a court of that place, there entered two men, who engaged in battle; and one was slain. The murderer instantly fled to the burial-ground, and escaped on the other side. By and by an extraordinary clamor penetrated through the whole city. "Where is the murderer? Where is the traitor?" was the general cry. "I am he," said our knight; "take me to crucifixion." They laid hands on him and led him away to prison. Early the next morning the city bell rang, and the judge sentenced him to be crucified. Amongst those who followed to witness his execution was the knight whom he had befriended; and the former, seeing him led towards the cross, knew him at once. "What!" cried he, "shall he be crucified, and I alive?" Shouting, therefore, with a loud voice. he said, "My friends! destroy not an innocent man. I am the murderer, and not he." Satisfied with his declaration, they immediately seized him and brought both to the cross. When they were near the place of execution, the real murderer, who happened to be present, thought thus, "I will not permit innocent blood to be shed: the vengeance of God will sooner or later overtake me, and it is better to suffer a short pain in this world than subject myself to everlasting toments in the next." Then lifting up his voice, "My friends, for God's sake, slay not

the guiltless. The dead man was killed without premeditation, and without the knowledge of either of these men. I only am the murderer; let these men go." The crowd, hearing what he said, instantly apprehended and brought him with no little amazement to the judge. The judge, seeing the reputed criminals along with them, asked with surprise why they had returned. They related what had occurred; and the judge, addressing the first knight, said, "Friend, why did you confess yourself the murderer?" "My lord," answered he, "I will tell you without deceit. In my own land I was rich; and everything that I desired I had. But I lost all this; and possessing neither house nor home, I was ashamed, and sought in this confession to obtain a remedy. I am willing to die; and for Heaven's love command me to be put to death." The judge then turning to the knight of Baldac—"And you, my friend! why did you avow yourself the murderer?" "My lord," replied he, "this knight bestowed upon me a wife, whom he had previously educated for himself, with an infinite store of wealth. When, therefore, I perceived my old and valued friend reduced to such an extremity, and saw him led rudely to the cross, I proclaimed myself the murderer. For his love I would willingly perish." "Now then," said the judge to the real homicide, "what have you to say for yourself?" "I have told the truth," answered he. "It would have been a heavy crime, indeed, had I permitted two innocent men to perish by my fault, and I therefore prefer to undergo the penalty here, than to be punished at some other time, or perhaps in hell." "Well," returned the judge, "since you have declared the truth and saved the lives of the innocent, study to amend your future life; for this time I pardon you—go in peace."

The people unanimously applauded the decision of the judge in acquitting the guilty person, whose magnanimity had rescued two innocent persons from death.

XVII. OF TWO KNIGHTS, ONE AVARICIOUS AND THE OTHER ENVIOUS

In the kingdom of a certain prince there were two knights, one of whom was avaricious, and the other envious. The former had a beautiful wife, whom everyone admired and loved. But the spouse of the latter was ugly and disagreeable. Now, the envious knight had a piece of land adjoining the estate of his covetous neighbor, of which the last exceedingly desired possession. He made him many offers, but the envious person invariably refused to sell his inheritance for silver or gold. At last, in the envy of his soul, he meditated how to destroy the beauty of the wife of the covetous knight, and offered him the land on condition of enjoying his wife for one night. The covetous wretch immediately assented; and bade his wife submit herself to his will. This diabolical contract adjusted, the envious knight instantly infected himself with the leprosy, and communicated the disease to the lady, for which he assigned the following reason. He said that, being filled with envy at the beauty and grace which he observed in his neighbor's wife, while his own was so deformed and hateful, he had resolved to remove the disparity. The lady wept exceedingly; and related to her husband what had happened. This troubled him, but he bethought himself of a remedy. "As yet," said he, "no symptoms of the disorder are perceptible. At a short distance from hence, there is a large city, and in it a university. Go there;

stand in the public way, and entice every passenger to you. By this means, you will free yourself from the distemper." The lady did as she was directed; and the emperor's son, passing by, fell violently in love with her. Afraid to infect a person so near the throne, she resisted his advances, and informed him that she was a leper. This, however, altered not the feelings of the young man; and accordingly the leprosy of the woman adhered to him. Ashamed of what had befallen, and at the same time fearful of discovery, he went to his mistress, and abode with her. This circumstance she stated to her husband, and he, much troubled, set his bed-chamber in order, and there the prince dwelt in the strictest seclusion attended upon only by the lady. Here he continued seven years.

It chanced in the seventh year that there was an intolerable heat, and the leprous man had a vessel of wine standing by his side, designed to refresh his exhausted spirits. At this moment a serpent came out of the garden, and, after bathing itself in the vessel, lay down at the bottom. The prince, awaking from sleep, under the influence of an excessive drought, took up the vessel and drank; and, without knowing it, swallowed the serpent. The creature, finding itself thus unexpectedly imprisoned, began to gnaw his bowels so grievously as to put the leper to inconceivable anguish. The lady compassionated him; and, indeed, for three days he was an object of pity. On the fourth, however, an emetic being administered, he vomited, and cast up, together with the inward disease, the serpent which had tormented him. Immediately the pain ceased; and by little and little the leprosy left him. In seven days his flesh was as free from the disorder as the flesh of a child; and the lady, much de-

lighted, clothed him in sumptuous apparel, and presented him a beautiful war-horse, on which he returned to the emperor. He was received with all honor, and after his father's death ascended the throne, and ended his days in peace.

[Queer notions were held regarding leprosy in the Middle Ages. Pliny describes the disease thus: "This disease also began, for the most part, in the face, and namely it took the nose, where it put forth a little speck, or pimple, no bigger than a small lentil; but soon after, as it spread farther, and ran over the whole body, a man should perceive the skin to be painted and spotted with diverse and sundry colors, and the same uneven, bearing out higher in one place than another, thick here but thin there, and hard everywhere; rough also, like as if a scurf or scab over-ran it, until, in the end, it would grow to be blackish, bearing down the flesh flat to the bones, while the fingers of the hands, and toes of the feet, were puffed and swelled again. A peculiar malady is this, and natural to the Egyptians; but look when any of their kings fell into it, woe worth the subjects and poor people, for there were the tubs and bathing vessels wherein they sat in the bath, filled with men's blood for their cure."

[The recent discovery (1925) in the United States of two cases of leprosy among schoolchildren in New Jersey gave rise to the following modern summary of the disease in *Time* (New York, July 6, 1925): "Leprosy (the grey death), according to certain medieval conjectures, issued in the form of a woman's body with a rat's head from the grave of the stillborn Antichrist; scientists have lately suggested that it is bred from putrid fish. Rising out of the East, it has crept down the centuries, a

slow, fatal smoke, eating in secret. When Godfrey de Bouillon rode against the Paladin in the 11th Century, it withered the flesh of his captains under their painted armor, followed their retreating banners into Europe. Contagious, it is never hereditary. . . . Symptoms, in the beginning, are those which attend the incubation of various diseases—irregular fever, dizziness, hyperesthesia of the skin, pains in the arms and legs, loss of sexual power. Foreboding appals the sufferer; faceless shapes of doom brawl in his mind; ulcers corrupt his arms; his skin greys; his eyebrows, loosened, overhang his eyes like disheveled blinds; while his voice shrinks and becomes raucous, as if he contended for the possession of it with an evil spirit. Little by little, as his body rots, an odor pervades it, more deathly and infinitely more revolting than that of the carnal house; the bones of his nose break off; toes, fingers, ears, drop away like dead hair. Insanity follows, terminated by death. In rare instances, the disease unaccountably vanishes, after eight years or so. Occasional cures are affected. . . ."]

XVIII. OF WOMEN, WHO ARE NOT TO BE TRUSTED

A Roman youth, named Papirius, was once present with his father in the senate at a time when a very important matter was debated, which, on pain of death, was to be kept secret. When the lad returned home, his mother asked him what it was that was guarded under so heavy a penalty. He replied that it was unlawful to reveal it. The mother, little satisfied with the boy's reply, entreated, promised, threatened, and even scourged him, in the hope of

extorting a communication. But he remained inflexible; and at last, willing to satisfy her, and yet retain his secret, said, "The council met upon this matter: whether it were more beneficial to the state that one man should have many wives, or one woman many husbands." The mother no sooner heard this, than away she posted to divide the important secret with other Roman dames. And on the following day, assembling a large body, they went without hesitation to the senators, earnestly requesting that one woman might be married to two men, rather than two women to one man. The senators, astonished at the shameless frenzy of a sex naturally modest, deliberated upon the best remedy. The boy Papirius, finding this, related to them the circumstance which had occasioned the uproar; and they, bestowing great commendation on his ingenuity, passed a decree that he should be present at their consultations whenever he would.

XIX. HOW A CERTAIN KNIGHT OBTAINED PARDON FOR HIS OFFENSES

A certain noble knight had grievously offended a king, whose vassal he was. He sent messengers to the monarch to intercede for him, and they obtained his pardon, but on condition that he should enter the senate-house on foot and on horseback at the same time; that is, half walking, half riding. Moreover, he was to bring with him his most attached friend, the best joculator or jester, and his most deadly foe. The knight, exceedingly distressed, reflected how these strange conditions were to be fulfilled. One night, as he exercised the hospitality of his mansion towards a pilgrim, he said privately to his wife, "I know these

pilgrims often carry considerable sums of money along with them. If you think fit, let us kill this fellow, and get possession of his money." "You say well," returned the lady; and when all were asleep, at an early hour in the morning, the knight arose, and awaking the pilgrim, bade him begone. He then slaughtered a calf, cut it into small pieces, and placed its mutilated body in a sack. Arousing his wife, he gave her the sack to hide in a corner of the house, observing, "I have only deposited the head, legs, and arms in the sack; the body is interred in our stable." He then showed her a little money, as if he had taken it from the murdered pilgrim.

Now, when the day approached on which he was bound to appear before his liege lord, he took upon his right hand a dog; and on his left his wife and unweaned child. As they drew near the royal castle he put one leg over the back of the dog, as if he were riding, while with the other he walked; and thus, as a pedestrian and equestrian, he entered the palace. When the king observed his cunning, he was greatly surprised. "But," said the judge, "where is your most attached friend?" Instantly unsheathing his sword, he severely wounded the dog, which fled howling away. The knight then called to him, and the dog returned. "Here," said he, "here is the most faithful of all friends." "True," answered the king; "where is your jester?" "Here also," replied the knight, pointing to his infant: "I never have so much pleasure as in the disportings of this child." "Well," continued the king, "where is your worst enemy?" Turning toward his wife, he struck her a violent blow, and exclaimed, "Impudent, harlot, how darest thou look wantonly upon the king?" The wife, furious at the injustice of the attack, shrieked violently.

"Cursed homicide," said she, "why dost thou smite me? Dost thou forget that, in thine own house, thou perpetratedst the most atrocious murder, and didst kill a pilgrim for the sake of a little gold?" Again the knight beat her. "Wretch!" said he, "why dost thou not fear to disgrace thy child?" To which she fiercely replied, "Come with me, and I will discover to you where the head and arms of the murdered pilgrim have been deposited in a sack; the body he has buried in the stable." Search was accordingly made; and digging where the wife directed, they were astonished to find manifest tokens of a calf's flesh. The attending nobles, recognizing in this the wit of the man, greatly extolled him; and he was ever after exceedingly valued and honored by his feudal lord.

[The "joculators" of the day were licensed jesters, going by various Latin terms, such as *joculator*, *scurra*, *mimus*, *minstrallus*, etc. They partook somewhat of the minstrel, as well as of the buffoon or clown.]

XX. OF ABSENCE OF PARENTAL RESTRAINT

A soldier, going into a far country, intrusted his wife to the care of her mother. But some time after her husband's departure the wife fell in love with a young man, and communicated her wishes to the mother. She approved of the connection, and without delay sent for the object of her daughter's criminal attachment. But while they feasted, the soldier unexpectedly returned and beat at his gate. The wife, in great tremor, concealed the lover in her bed, and then opened the door for her husband. Being weary with travel, he commanded his bed to be got ready; and the wife, more

and more disturbed, knew not what she should do. The mother observing her daughter's perplexity, said, "Before you go, my child, let us show your husband the fair sheet which we have made." Then standing up, she gave one corner of the sheet to her daughter and held the other herself, extending it before him so as to favor the departure of the lover, who took the hint and escaped. When he had got clearly off, "Now," said the mother, "spread the sheet upon the bed with your own hands—we have done our parts in *weaving* it."

[It will be observed that this tale, the 123d in the *Gesta*, bears a close resemblance to XIV (the 122d in the *Gesta*). Both tales are in Alphonsus, and the complication occurs in many of the Italian novelists.]

XXI. OF WORLDLY GLORY AND LUXURY

There formerly lived a king who had two knights resident in one city. One of them was old, the other young. The old knight was rich, and had married a youthful damsel on account of her exquisite beauty. The young knight was poor, and espoused an old woman in consequence of her immense wealth. It happened that the young knight walked by the castle of the elder, and in a window his wife sat, and sang deliciously. The youth was much taken with her, and said in his heart, "It would be ten thousand times better if that sweet girl were united to me, and her old doting husband possessed of my infirm wife." From that hour he conceived a violent affection for her, and made her many valuable presents. The lady entertained a similar feeling, and, whenever

she could, permitted him to visit her. She endeavored also to secure him for her husband in the event of the old man's death. Now, near the window of the castle which the old knight occupied, there grew a fig-tree, on which a nightingale stationed herself every evening, and uttered the most ravishing harmony. This circumstance drew the lady thither; and it became a custom with her to remain at the window a long time, to listen to the song of the nightingale. When her husband, good man! noticed this extreme watchfulness, he said, "My dear, what is the reason that you get up every night with so much regularity?" "A nightingale," answered she, "sings upon the fig-tree, opposite my window; and her song is so delightful that I cannot resist the pleasure of listening to it." The old knight hearing this, arose early in the morning, and, armed with bow and arrow, hastened to the fig-tree. He shot the nightingale, and taking out the heart, presented it to his wife. The lady wept bitterly, and said, "Sweet bird, *thou* didst but what became thee. I alone am the occasion of thy death." Immediately she despatched a messenger to the youthful knight, to inform him of her husband's cruelty. The intelligence grieved him to the heart's core, and he exclaimed internally, "If this cruel old wretch only knew how much his wife and I are attached to each other, he would treat me even more vilely!" This reflection determined him; he cased himself in a double coat of mail, and entering the castle, slew the aged knight. Soon after this, his old wife dying, he married the widow of the old knight. They lived many years, and ended their days in peace.

XXII. OF THE TRANSGRESSIONS AND WOUNDS OF THE SOUL

In the reign of Titus there lived a certain noble and devout knight, who had a beautiful wife; but she dishonored herself, and persisted in her dishonor. The knight, therefore, was very sorrowful, and resolved to visit the Holy Land. In this determination he said to his wife, "My beloved, I go to the Holy Land, and leave you to the guidance of your own discretion." No sooner had he embarked than the lady sent for a certain skilful necromancer, whom she loved; and he dwelt with her. It happened that, as they lay in bed, the lady observed, "If you would do one thing for me, I might become your wife." "What is it," replied he, "that will please you, and which I can perform for you?"

"My husband is gone to the Holy Land, and loves me little; now, if by your art you could destroy him, all that I possess is yours." "I acquiesce," said the clerk, "but on condition that you marry me." To this the lady bound herself, and the necromancer fashioned an image under the similitude and name of the knight, and fixed it before him on the wall.

In the meantime, while the knight was passing through the main street of Rome, a wise master met him in the way, and observing him narrowly, said, "My friend, I have a secret to communicate."

"Well, master, what would you please to say?"

"This day you are one of death's children, unless you follow my advice; your wife is a

harlot, and contrives your death." The knight, hearing what was said of his spouse, put confidence in the speaker, and said, "Good master, save my life, and I will amply recompense you." "Willingly," answered the other, "if you will do as I shall tell you." The knight promised, and the master took him to a bath, undressed him, and desired him to bathe. "Look attentively upon this mirror, and you will see wonders." He did so, and the meanwhile the master read to him from a book. "What see you?" he asked. "I see," said the knight, "a certain clerk in my house, with an image of wax which resembles me, and which he has fastened in the wall." "Look again," continued the master; "what do you perceive now?"

"He takes a bow, and places in it a sharp arrow; and now he aims at the effigy."

"As you love your life, the moment you discern the arrow flying to its mark, place yourself in the bath, and remain there until I tell you to come out."

As soon, therefore, as the arrow quitted the string, he plunged his body into the water. This done, the master said, "Raise your head and look into the mirror! What do you perceive now?" "The effigy is not struck, and the arrow is sticking by its side. The clerk appears much concerned." "Look in the mirror once more," said the master, "and observe what he does." "He now goes nearer to the image, and refixes the arrow in the string in order to strike it."

"As you value your life, do as before."

Again the knight plunged his body into the water as soon as he saw by the mirror that the clerk was bending the bow; and then, at the command of the master, resuming his inspection of the mirror, said—

"The clerk makes great lamentation, and says to my wife, 'If the third time I do not strike the effigy, I shall lose my life.' Now he approaches so near that I think he cannot miss it."

"Take care," said the master, "as soon as you see him bend the bow, immerse your body as I before told you." The night watched attentively, and as soon as he saw the clerk draw back the bow to shoot, plunged below the water. "Rise quickly, and look into the mirror." When he had done so, he began to laugh. "My friend," said the master, "why do you laugh?" "I observe," answered he, "very distinctly, that the clerk has missed the effigy, and that the arrow, rebounding, has entered his bowels and destroyed him. My wife makes a hole under my bed, and there he is buried."

"Rise, then, dress yourself, and pray to God."

The knight returned sincere thanks for his life, and, having performed his pilgrimage, journeyed toward his own home. His wife met and received him with much apparent pleasure. He dissembled for a few days, and then sending for her parents, said to them, "My dear friends, hear why I have desired your presence. This woman, your daughter and my wife, has committed adultery; and, what is worse, designed to murder me." The lady denied the accusation with an oath. The knight then began to relate the whole story of the clerk's actions and end. "And," he continued, "if you do not credit this, come and see where the clerk is buried." He then led them into the bedchamber, and dragged the body from its hiding-place. The judge was called, and sentenced her to be burnt, and her ashes to be scattered in

the air. The knight soon afterwards espoused a beautiful virgin, by whom he had many children; and with whom he finished his days in peace.

XXIII. OF A KING'S DAUGHTER, WHO WOULD BE MARRIED ONLY ON THE FULFILMENT OF THREE CONDITIONS

A certain king had a beautiful and wise daughter, whom he was desirous of marrying. But she had sworn never to unite herself to any but upon three conditions. First, he was to state accurately how many feet there were in the length, breadth, and depth of the four elements. Secondly, he was to change the north wind. And thirdly, he was to carry fire in his bosom without injury. When the king, therefore, understood his daughter's resolution, he proclaimed it through the kingdom, and promised to give her in marriage to whosoever performed the conditions. Many endeavored, but failed; until at length a certain knight from foreign parts heard of the girl's oath. He hastened to the palace, conveying with him but a single attendant, and an extremely fiery horse. On being admitted into the king's presence, he said, "I am desirous of espousing your majesty's daughter, and I am prepared to solve the questions which have been proposed." The king assented, and the soldier, calling his servant, commanded him to lie upon the earth. And when he was thus laid, his master measured his length from one extremity to the other. When he had done this, he said to the king, "My lord, your first question is solved; I find in the four elements scarcely seven feet." "How?" replied the king. "What has this to

do with the four elements?" "My lord," answered the soldier, "every man, as well as every animal, is composed of the four elements." "Amen," said the king, "you have proved this very satisfactorily. Now then for the second condition, which is to change the wind." Immediately he caused his horse to be brought into the area of the court, and there administered a potion, by which the animal was made perfectly quiet. This done, he turned his horse's head towards the east, and said, "Observe, my lord, the wind is changed from north to east." "How?" answered the king, "what is this to the wind?" "Sire," returned the soldier, "is it not obvious to your wisdom that the life of every animal consists in his breath, which is air? As long as he raged fiercely, so long was he in the north. But when I had given him the potion I turned him toward the east, so that he is ready to bear his burden." "This also," said the king, "you have well proved; go on to the third." "My lord," replied the soldier, "this, so please you, I will perform before all your court." Then, taking up a handful of burning coals, he deposited them in his bosom, without injury to the flesh. "Truly," exclaimed the king, "you have done very well in these matters: but tell me, how happens it that you are unhurt by the fire?" "It was not," returned the soldier, "by any power of my own, but by virtue of a singular stone, which I always carry about with me. And whosoever possess this stone is able to resist the hottest fire." The king, satisfied that the conditions had been accurately complied with, gave orders for his marriage with the lady. He loaded him with riches and honors, and they both ended their days in the greatest happiness.

This tale, of course, would be much more effective if the final condition had not been

fulfilled with the aid of a magic charm. For the purposes of the monks, however, the magic was quite suitable, for it could represent, very aptly, some factor in their perpetual application —as, in this very story, "the fire in the bosom is luxury, pride, avarice, etc., and the stone is a true and lively faith in Christ." So it is that many of the stories which would otherwise be good yarns are hampered by the considerations imposed by the appended moral.]